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## GEOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

### TERRITORIAL PROBLEMS OF THE PEACE CONFERENCE

C. H. HASKINS AND R. H. LORD. **Some Problems of the Peace Conference.** xii and 307 pp.; maps, bibliogr., index. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1920. 9 x 6 inches.

Publications on the Peace Conference of Paris, 1919, are of special interest to geographers because the questions of territorial boundaries and their relation to the distribution of people are necessarily discussed in practically every one of them. The map of Europe has been redrawn. The basis of the new lines, the conditions of the new settlement, the rearrangement or improvement of the economic life, all involve in their discussion the physical data of geography, the intricate, intimate details of relief and hydrography, of soil and climate and forests, and scores of distributional factors that relate to the earth as the home of man. In their effects on man the new conditions of life must be thoroughly analyzed from the geographic standpoint; and this it is difficult to do until new census statistics are available and old statistics officially revised. If these things be so it is well that geographers should also know a great deal of the background of the settlement, if only that they may be more discriminating in the selection and use of the available data. That background is altogether difficult to acquire. To understand this let us look at some general considerations.

So diverse were the objects of different nations and peoples during the war that no set of formulae could have been found to fit Allied purposes. When, with new hopes suddenly inflated by a sweeping victory, the Allies gathered for the settlement, they were confronted by an impossibly difficult task. No treaty could have been drawn that would have satisfied more than a small fraction of humanity. Necessarily confined to a generalized program, the preliminaries of the armistice and the Peace Conference received almost universal approval only because they were put into general terms. The moment that specific settlements had to be proposed every interested party felt betrayed. And the peoples of the whole world were all talking at once. A delegation from Orawa in the foothill region of the Carpathians came to Paris in native peasant costume to argue union with Poland; Slovene representatives came to argue against Italian ownership of Fiume; Macedonians came looking for the millennium. Opposed to these were equally earnest advocates using the same formulae, the same glittering phrases interspersed with "liberty," "justice," "humanity," "self-determination." Many of the rival arguments of Rumanians and Serbs for possession of the Banat were almost precisely the same; only the statistics were different! In the presence of admittedly doctored official statistics there was only one course to pursue—fight fire with fire. Each one of the Central European nationalities had its own bagful of statistical and cartographical tricks. When statistics failed use was made of maps in color. It would take a huge monograph to contain an analysis of all the types of map forgeries that the war and the Peace Conference called forth. A new instrument was discovered—the map language. A map was as good as a brilliant poster, and just being a map made it respectable, authentic.

The confusion of political purposes, the vast scale of the complicated negotiations, and the high stakes of the conference, tempted every journalist to dramatize his account. Never before has journalism broken down so completely in the face of a great task—a breakdown which was not altogether the fault of journalism. In consequence there is not even an approximately reliable well-rounded account of the Peace Conference in print. Its work has been written up from the political and the journalistic standpoints, not as history. Even the geographic work of the conference has been analyzed in a partisan spirit.

In the midst of this Stygian darkness it is heartening to see a light upon the way. Haskins and Lord have done the world a service. Geographers as well as historians are their debtors. These two scholars, bred in the spirit of research, think and write as men seeking to reveal truth. The first chapter is entitled "Tasks and Methods." Its literary style and subject matter make it most interesting to the general reader. Its thirty pages are worth more than five hundred of any other book on the peace conference. The conservationists could find here a new text. A serious part of the material wastage in this world is due to our lax system of allowing poor writers to spoil good paper. A tree, even of the pulpwood variety, is surely a nobler thing than an untruthful and misleading even though chatty and apparently intimate volume.

It is the statistical matter, dealing with economic and ethnographic problems, that will be of greatest use to geographers. The authors have had the advantage of association

with a large number of experts on the "Inquiry," the organization that prepared research material for the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, and they have had the further advantage of knowing men and events on the ground. They served on various territorial commissions of the Peace Conference and speak with authority and not as the scribes. Their statements of fact were tested by the fire of actual experience. The refinement of statistical expression was a constant and necessary process in all the boundary settlements.

There is, however, no pretense to make the book a geographical treatise. The avowed object is a discussion of a single theme—the territorial settlements. The specific value of the book, from the standpoint of scholarship alone, lies in its vivid and authoritative treatment of the historical setting of each problem. The people of central and western Europe are accustomed to thinking historically. Some of the strongest motives of today have their sources from deep within what might be called the historical structure as well as the relations of a people. The motivations of the western democracies are of a wholly different type. The geographer who would really understand a people or a new nation now appearing on the map cannot have a balanced or scientific understanding of his problem if he deals only with the physical setting. So much has been written on the new boundaries established by the peace treaties by way of destructive criticism that a cool and scholarly analysis is most timely and useful.

The captious critic would find most of this book thorny reading. If the new boundary in the Banat of Temesvar cuts across a score or more of drainage lines and roads, if the new boundary of Hungary requires half a hundred custom houses, turntables and stations, it is indeed a calamity. But what is the other horn of the dilemma? It is easy to picture economic injustice when new boundaries have to be laid down. Has anyone drawn better proposals on a map? The world could not have survived the blow to it had the old boundaries been followed. The present chaos is deplorable; the chaos resulting from a denial of the national aspirations of Czechs, Serbs, and Poles would have been fatal. If these states had to be established they had also to be given vitality. It will be one of the most interesting and valuable of the future tasks of the geographer and the economist to see what adaptations of frontiers, or of physical or political circumstances will be evolved as a result of the fragmentation of Central Europe and the inevitable resulting disturbances to the economy of the inhabitants. We had thought of Europe as an adjusted region where life had become well fitted to environment; we see it now, in an instant, set to pioneering again—not in the old sense, but in a political and social sense, with only the old geographical and historical foundations on which to build.

The book covers but a part of the European settlements and does not touch the other continents. For example, the Baltic states are not treated, nor is there a statement of the Turkish or Pacific or Far Eastern problems. This is due to the limitations of the lecture form in which the several chapters were prepared and the brevity of the course (Lowell Lectures). The maps leave much to be desired. An invaluable feature is the well-selected list of references partly to original and partly to secondary sources of material.

#### THE IRRIGATION PROBLEM IN THE NILE BASIN

WILLIAM WILLCOCKS. *The Nile Projects.* xii and 184 pp.; maps, diagrs., index. [Cairo], 1919. 10 x 6½ inches.

MURDOCK MACDONALD. *Nile Control Works.* 16 pp.; map. Ministry of Public Works, Cairo, 1919.

One of the claims of Egyptian nationalists is that Egypt is taxed for the benefit of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and that in the material development of the Sudan insufficient account is taken of the water problems of the lower Nile valley. These political differences between the Egyptian leaders and the British administration find a basis in a difference of opinion on the part of the engineers upon the best method of regulating the irrigation waters of the Nile. The two papers here dealt with present opposite views. Despite their controversial character the papers are of great value to the geographical student in their presentation of a clear picture of the present irrigation situation in Egypt.

The battle of Omdurman marks the beginning of the recent period in which British engineers have sought to extend the cotton lands of the Nile valley by a more conservative use of Nile waters. The two great enemies of the country are drought and inundation. Sir William divides the Egyptian year into three seasons: summer, flood, and winter. The first extends from the beginning of April to the end of July, when the Nile is at its lowest. The second extends from the beginning of August to the end of November, when the Nile overflows its banks. The third includes the months of December, January, February, and March, when the Nile is confined within its channel but carries a supply in excess of agricultural requirements.

Associated with each of these three seasons there are three groups of crops. The summer crops are cotton, sugar cane, millets, rice, vegetables, and fruit. The flood crop is maize